

# ESC: In the current context, industry support for continuing medical education remains essential

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In a groundbreaking White Paper published today in the *European Heart Journal*, the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) has set out its perspective on the relationship between the healthcare industry and professional medical associations with regard to the funding and delivery of continuing medical education (CME).

Essential in helping to reduce the burden of [cardiovascular disease](#) across Europe – the ESC's over-arching mission – physicians have both a professional and ethical duty to undertake CME in order to provide the highest level of patient care. Without it, medical knowledge can be out-of-date in just five years.

To facilitate this, the White Paper concludes that continued support and funding for CME from industry remains essential, and that the continued co-operation between the academic and private sectors is entirely appropriate as long as it always takes a principled and balanced approach. All such collaboration must also adhere to strict codes of conduct – such as that already in place at the ESC – to maintain transparency and minimise the risk of bias.

In the White Paper, the ESC suggests that avoiding single company sponsorship of CME through the provision of unrestricted educational grants may represent the most transparent way forward within the existing model – an area it believes warrants further research and debate.

Looking specifically at the delivery of educational programmes, the ESC believes a cultural shift may be required to maximise the effectiveness of CME. It proposes a move away from traditional learning formats such as lectures, and instead placing greater emphasis on small group practical sessions based on clinical cases.

The paper also concludes that as a professional, independent association representing more than 71,000 experts within every field of cardiovascular medicine, the ESC is well placed to lead the development of CME. The ESC has already designed a wide range of educational resources and programmes which are independently certified by organisations such as the European Accreditation Council for Continuing [Medical Education](#) (EACCME).

In addition, the ESC publishes seven peer-reviewed general and specialist cardiology journals, from which 4.5 million electronic downloads are made every year, and has developed cutting-edge e-learning programmes which it believes will have an increasingly important role to play in CME in the future, by enabling physicians to learn without having to travel long distances.

Entitled 'Relations between professional medical associations and the healthcare industry, concerning scientific communication and continuing medical education – a Policy Statement from the European Society of Cardiology', it is hoped that the document will provide physicians, industry, policymakers and NGOs (non-governmental organisations) alike with much-needed clarity on the most appropriate ways to ensure the continued provision of CME, while at the same time maintaining transparency and public confidence.

Commenting on the importance of the White Paper, ESC President, Professor Michel Komajda says: "The implementation of medical advances is only possible if they are communicated effectively, and

every cardiologist has a professional and ethical duty to keep up-to-date to offer patients the best possible care based on this progress.

"Without the healthcare industry's support for the provision of continuing medical education the onus would inevitably fall on the public sector, which is clearly not viable in light of today's challenging economic conditions across [Europe](#)."

Continues Prof Komajda: "Therefore, such involvement is necessary and entirely appropriate, but must take place in a principled manner, adhering to a strict code of conduct to ensure complete transparency. As a responsible and independent organisation, which draws on the collective wisdom of its members across all areas of cardiology to make considered and balanced decisions, the ESC is ideally placed to lead the development and delivery of CME in this fast moving and complex specialty and we hope our [White Paper](#) and best practice guidelines will make a significant contribution to this process."

Provided by European Society of Cardiology

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